



June 4, 2008

Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> “Na Chisto” Celebrates Five Years of Investigative Journalism

The USAID-supported weekly TV investigative program “Na Chisto” (Clean Slate) celebrated its fifth anniversary at a ceremony in Sofia last week. DCM Alexander Karagiannis, Petko Georgiev, Executive Director of the Broadcast Training Center ProMedia, and Silva Zurleva, President of the Board of NOVA TV, spoke at the event.



BTC Director Petko Georgiev addresses guests at the “Na Chisto” anniversary.

The event highlighted the recent award “Freedom of Speech – a Signal to Europe” awarded to Na Chisto reporter Kristina Koleva by the Austrian affiliate of the media freedom NGO Reporters without Frontiers. Her award-winning episode featured a dramatic instance of mismanagement by the Ministry of Health, which prevented access to critical medication for cancer patients. Three-time Emmy-award winning American journalist Pamela Baldwin made a video statement highlighting the impact of the prestigious award.

The Broadcast Training Center (BTC) ProMedia is the producer of “Na Chisto,” dedicated to the investigation of corruption, organized crime and abuse of power. BTC, a premier USAID legacy in Bulgaria, is an independent producer of high-quality TV programming and provider of training services to the media community in Bulgaria and the region. BTC has produced over 250 “Na Chisto” episodes.

The “Na Chisto” audience and ratings steadily increased in recent years. The cumulative audience of the program includes millions of Bulgarians, with over 400,000 viewers watching the program on a regular basis. Its impact can be measured by dismissals of government officials, prosecutions against university presidents, withdrawal of draft legislation serving vested interests, and the revocation of shady privatization deals. As a direct result of the broadcasts, many public institutions have improved their transparency standards. ❖

>> Micro-lending Program in Roma Communities Supports Almost 800 Entrepreneurs



USTOI Executive Director Pavel Velev (second from left), Boryana Karamiteva, Polina Pasakleva (USTOI staff), with Lidia Dimitrova (second from right), and her son - clients of USTOI.

On May 30, Catholic Relief Services, USTOI, Mikrofond and USAID officially closed the “Inclusive Business Development of Roma Communities” project. CRS awarded certificates to six USTOI and Mikrofond staff for the most prominent contribution to the success of the project.

Since the project was launched in 2006, project partners provided loans totaling 894,792 euros to 796 micro-entrepreneurs (primarily from ethnic minorities) from 11 locations in Bulgaria. The two partners, USTOI and Mikrofond, will continue to provide financial and non-financial services to disadvantaged groups in Bulgaria after the completion of the project”. ❖



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>> Georgetown University Scholarship Program Concludes in Bulgaria

The USAID-funded East Central European Scholarship Program (ECESP), implemented by the Georgetown University Intercultural Studies Department, presented the program's achievements in Bulgaria on May 29 in Sofia. Many Bulgarian leaders have benefited from the program, including EU Commissioner Meglena Kuneva. The ECESP started in 1990 to assist emerging democracies of Eastern Europe to transform their post-communist societies and economies. Since 1998, ECESP has been active in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania. For the past 9 years, the program trained more than 160 Bulgarian experts in long-term academic scholarship non-degree programs and more than 250 Bulgarians in short-term regional or in-country training programs.

The program trained administrators and managers in areas such as leading and managing change; strengthening democratic governance; developing economic growth; improving health and social services; finance and banking; auditing; public administration; regional and local development; risk management; health financing; international health; labor; and NGO management. ♦

>> Bulgaria Fund Announces First Grant Recipients

The Bulgaria Fund, a USAID legacy funding mechanism, is a 3-year program administered through the German Marshall Fund of the United States to award grants to Bulgarian NGOs working in three priority areas: Good Governance, Support to Vulnerable Groups, and Competitiveness. The successful projects and organizations in the first round of grants are:

ORGANIZATION	PROJECT
Association of Rhodope Municipalities	<i>Good Governance in the Rhodope Region of Bulgaria</i>
Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law (BCNL)	<i>Building Up an Effective Cooperation between Civic Organizations and Public Administration in the Decision-Making Process</i>
Economic Policy Institute (EPI)	<i>Transparent Governance on Central and Local Level in Bulgaria – Raising Administrative Capacity and Enhancing Cooperation to Reduce Corruption Risks and Practices in Public Procurement</i>
Center for the Study of Democracy	<i>Monitoring of anti-corruption reforms in Bulgaria</i>
Journalists Against Corruption	<i>The Prosecution Facing Society</i>
Business Foundation for Education	<i>Career Counseling Services – Mechanism for Preparing Competitive and Efficient Labor Force in Bulgaria</i>
Open Society Club (OSC) – Sliven	<i>Supporting Judicial Reform in the South-East Planning Region through Enhancement of the Cooperation between Judiciary and Civil Society</i>
Bulgarian Institute for Legal Initiatives Foundation (BILI)	<i>Improvement of the Quality of Legal Education as a Guarantee for Successful Judicial Reform</i>
Risk Monitor Foundation	<i>Basic Practices for Money Laundering in Human Trafficking in Bulgaria</i>
Regional Association of Municipalities “Trakia”	<i>Active Civic Participation for Stronger Local Self-Government</i>
Access – Sofia Foundation	<i>Monitoring Municipal Economic Activities</i>

For more information please visit <http://www.gmfus.org/bulgariafund>